

## DEACON QUALIFICATIONS

The qualifications of a deacon are similar to those of a bishop/elder/pastor.

“In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus” ([1 Timothy 3:8–13](#)).

The word translated “deacon” in this passage is a form of the same Greek word used in [Acts 6:2](#), so we know we are talking about the same office.

Paul identifies nine qualifications for deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8-12:

1. **Dignified (v. 8):** This term normally refers to something that is honorable, respectable, esteemed, or worthy, and is closely related to “respectable,” which is given as a qualification for elders (1 Tim. 3:2).
2. **Not double-tongued (v. 8):** Those who are double-tongued say one thing to certain people but then say something else to others or say one thing but mean another. They are two-faced and insincere. Their words cannot be trusted, so they lack credibility.
3. **Not addicted to much wine (v. 8):** A man is disqualified for the office of deacon if he is addicted to wine or other strong drink. Such a person lacks self-control and is undisciplined.
4. **Not greedy for dishonest gain (v. 8):** If a person is a lover of money, he is not qualified to be a deacon.
5. **Sound in faith and life (v. 9):** Paul also indicates that a deacon must “hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.” The phrase “the mystery of the faith” is simply one way Paul speaks of the gospel (cf. 1 Tim. 3:16). Consequently, this statement refers to the need for deacons to hold firm to the true gospel without wavering. Yet this qualification does not merely involve one’s beliefs, for he must also

hold these beliefs “with a clear conscience.” That is, the behavior of a deacon must be consistent with his beliefs.

6. **Blameless (v. 10):** Paul writes that deacons must “be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless” (v. 10). “Blameless” is a general term referring to a person’s overall character. Although Paul does not specify what type of testing is to take place, at a minimum, the candidate’s personal background, reputation, and theological positions should be examined. Moreover, the congregation should not only examine a potential deacon’s moral, spiritual, and doctrinal maturity, but should also consider the person’s track record of service in the church.
7. **Godly spouse (v. 11):** It is debated whether verse 11 refers to a deacon’s wife or to a deaconess. For the sake of this discussion, we will assume the verse is speaking about the qualifications of a deacon’s wife. According to Paul, deacons’ wives must “be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things” (v. 11). Like her husband, the wife must be dignified or respectable. Secondly, she must not be a slanderer or a person who goes around spreading gossip. A deacon’s wife must also be sober-minded or temperate. That is, she must be able to make good judgments and must not be involved in things that might hinder such judgment. Finally, she must be “faithful in all things” (cf. 1 Tim. 5:10). This is a general requirement which functions similarly to the requirement for elders to be “above reproach” (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6) and for deacons to be “blameless” (1 Tim. 3:10).
8. **Husband of one wife (v. 12):** The best interpretation of this difficult phrase is to understand it as referring to the faithfulness of a husband toward his wife. He must be a “one-woman man.” That is, there must be no other woman in his life to whom he relates in an intimate way either emotionally or physically.
9. **Manage children and household well (v. 12):** A deacon must be the spiritual leader of his wife and children.

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